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S E R M O N S,

PREACHED AT

GRAY'S-INN CHAPEL;

On FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 1793,

Being the day appointed by Authority for a PUBLIC FAST;

And on SUNDAY, APRIL 28.

By WALKER KING, D.D. AND F.A.S.

PREACHER TO THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF GRAY'S-INN.

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1793.

THE OIL PAINTS

TO
THE WORSHIPFUL
THE MASTERS OF THE BENCH,

OF THE
HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF GRAY'S-INN,

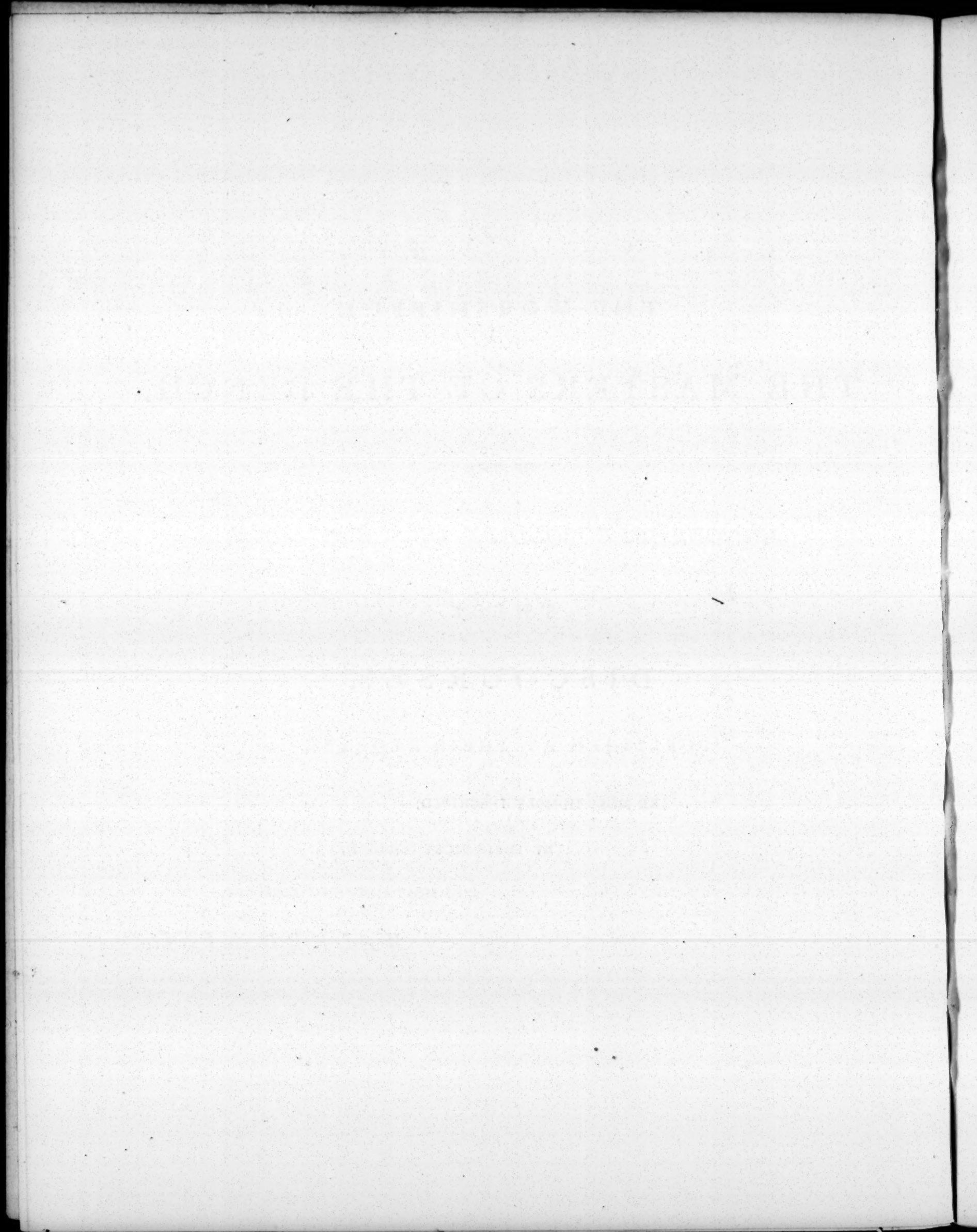
THESE
DISCOURSES,
PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

ARE MOST HUMBLY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR MOST OBLIGED,

AND MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT,

WALKER KING.



SERMON I.

St. LUKE, c. xiii. v. 5.

"NAY: BUT, EXCEPT YE REPENT, YE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH."

IN the time of our Saviour, a great calamity had fallen upon certain of the Jewish nation. Pilate, through resentment of some insult which had been offered to the Roman government in Galilee, had treacherously put to death a number of persons of that country, who had come up to Jerusalem to worship. It was about the same time that the Tower of Siloam fell, and buried under its ruins eighteen persons. These events gave occasion to the words of my Text.

The persons who reported them to our Lord, seem to have conceived an opinion, founded on the delusions of self-love and the consequent want of charity towards other men, that the unhappy sufferers were *sinners above*

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all the other inhabitants of Judea; a conclusion, which they probably expected to hear confirmed from the mouth of Christ.

It is very certain, that no calamity can happen to a man, that does not happen to a sinner. We are all concluded under that law. But the magnitude of the iniquity is not to be estimated by the present severity of the punishment, or by the promptitude with which it is inflicted. Perhaps Providence deals otherwise; the greatest sinner may be the last punished; and because he is so, the more dreadfully dealt with, either here or hereafter. These are unfathomable depths, which we are to adore in silence. But, whilst we fear and tremble, we ought to learn; or else both the goodness and justice of God are thrown away upon us.

Our Divine Teacher, as you will read at the end of the preceding chapter, had just before expostulated with the Jews upon their wilful blindness and inattention to the many evident signs, with which those times abounded, *that the day of the Lord* (the day of their salvation or final rejection), *was at hand.---When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say there cometh a shower, and*

so it is; and when ye see the south wind blow, ye say that there will be heat, and it cometh to pass: Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it ye do not discern this time? And on this occasion, instead of falling in with the uncharitable propensities and gratifying the ill-fated malevolence of this people, our Lord directs their attention to the true use of such extraordinary dispensations, and impresses on them the deep personal concern they had in those prophetic calamities. *But Israel would not know, his people would not consider, and accordingly, before that very generation had passed away, the people of Judea, having filled up the measure of its iniquity, was swept away by an exterminating burst of vengeance, signal, as had been foretold, in the manner and in the circumstances of its execution*.*

* The words of the Text, in the original, πάντες ὁμοίως ἀπολείαθε, which are translated, "ye shall all *likewise* perish," import, "ye shall all *in like manner* perish." Josephus relates two events in which this prediction was remarkably fulfilled.—The first happened when Cumanus was procurator of Judea (A. C. 49), at which time, in consequence of some tumult among the Jews, who were come up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, the Romans fell upon them and slaughtered 20,000. The second took place at the siege of Jerusalem, when, by the sudden approach of the Roman

We are taught by the Scripture, that the events of sacred history are not merely historical relations, or grounds of evidence for the truth of Revelation. They are not barren facts, but pregnant with moral principles. *All these things, brethren, happened unto them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come.* They teach us to read the ways of God in his dealings with man in his collective and social capacity; they teach us that we cannot, either as public bodies or as individuals, without impiety, disregard those awful warnings with which he is pleased to prepare his judgments. We may therefore be warranted in assuming, that transactions and events so deeply marked by the hand of a wrathful Providence, as are those, which in a neighbouring country have filled us with astonishment and with horror, cannot have happened without a purpose. They must be surely intended to awaken every

army during the feast of the Passover, the whole nation of the Jews was enclosed, as it were, in one vast prison, and suffered all the complicated horrors of famine, pestilence, and civil fury. The number of those who perished is computed by Josephus to have been 1,100,000.

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other nation to a due sense of their sins, and of the necessity of a sincere and speedy repentance.

I trust therefore that we shall not employ our time unseasonably, if on the present occasion we endeavour, in the first place, to call to our minds the general grounds upon which we believe that the calamities, with which God is sometimes pleased to visit nations, are great instruments of his moral government. This will lead us in the next place to the consideration not only of those circumstances in public affairs, which in a political light appear alarming; but more particularly of those national and prevailing vices, which in a religious view constitute our true danger.

Those principles, by which we are led to conclude, that this world was in the beginning created by God; that it is upheld, as it was at first made, by the word of his Power; and that in every moment of its subsistence it is governed by his over-ruling Providence, ^{are} is the foundation of all Religion. ^{They are} ~~It is~~ the foundation of Faith, by which we believe; of Hope, by which we pray; of Charity, by which Man is linked to Man, and Man united to God.

As we see that the world was made on a design, we
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fee that it was made according to an order. Animal life is above brute matter; a rational Being is above an animal; and a rational Being must be a moral Being. The moral world is therefore highest in the scale of God's creation. Now the whole scheme of creation would be rendered absurd and preposterous, if it could be supposed, that every thing, which falls out in the inferior and subordinate state of nature, is not made ultimately, in some way or other, in subservience to moral ends and purposes, and to answer the plan of a moral government. The moral Creator and the moral Governor regards principally the moral creature; though, according to that order, he is never absent from any part of his works. *He numbers the very hairs of our head; without his direction a sparrow does not fall to the ground.* How, indeed, can he for an instant suspend his Omnipotence and Omnipresence? *He doth according to his will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the Earth. He refraineth the Spirit of Princes, and is wonderful among the Kings of the Earth. He reigneth over all, be the people never so impatient, and sitteth between the Cherubim be the Earth never so inquiet. Surely no heart can think upon those things worthily; and who is able to conceive his ways?*

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The belief of an over-ruling Providence, presiding over the fixed operations of (what for want of better terms we call) *natural causes*, and over all the various contingencies which result from the freedom of the human will, combining and directing both, and directing them, particularly as well as generally, by an unerring Prescience, invariably to fulfil the councils of an infinite Wisdom, tends to give us the most exalted idea of that Divine Essence, in whom *we live, and move, and have our being*. This sublime doctrine, like every thing which relates to God, is indeed not easy to be comprehended. Every truth we discover concerning that mysterious Being discovers also a difficulty. There is clearness enough in this kind of speculations abundantly to ascertain a solid opinion: darkness enough to employ a devout submission.

That the world was created by a Being infinite in wisdom and power, and that it subsists by the same, is indeed a great and fundamental truth, and furnishes one of the subjects of the noblest contemplation with which the intellect of man can be conversant: but that truth, which comes home to the heart, and which not only engages our understanding, but exercises our hopes and
fears

fears, is the doctrine of Providence. It is this which touches us as moral agents.

If we have this grand truth steadily and constantly in view, there is no event which does not become a lesson to us; no circumstance, publick or private, can happen, upon which we may not engraft some virtue. Misfortunes may humble pride and awaken reflection; dangers incurred, become lectures of caution; great escapes calls to thankfulness; doubtful but necessary enterprizes will put us upon examining ourselves minutely, to know how far we are prepared for trial and armed for combat.

The whole scheme of Providence, it is true, is not completed in this world. To comprehend the whole of that scheme, we must take in the whole of our existence. This is to us a never-failing source both of direction and of comfort. This visible world is not our country; we belong to another region. There it is we must set up our rest. But on the anxious, desert road to that promised land, our Heavenly Parent accompanies us all our way, sometimes in a pillar of fire, sometimes in a pillar of cloud. By extraordinary dispensations,
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sometimes at our own expence, sometimes at that of our brethren, he mercifully deigns to awaken and rouse us from the lethargy of vice, to warn us by small dangers that are near, of greater that are remote; and when we stray, by holding out to us images of punishment, to incite us by authoritative calls to repentance and amendment: *When his Judgments are abroad in the Earth, the inhabitants thereof shall learn Righteousness.*

Of this kind of Judgments were the events, which gave occasion to the words of the Text: and we are warranted by the example and required by the authority of our Lord, to consider under the same point of view, those signal calamities that have befallen a neighbouring people, which, after having exhausted its fury on its own fellow-citizens, has had the wickedness to attempt, at first by secret machinations, and afterwards by open force, to exercise the same cruelties upon us and all surrounding nations.

And this brings me to the second head of this discourse, namely, the consideration of those dangers in the present posture of our affairs, to avert which we have been called to this solemn act of humiliation and prayer.

And first, it is needless for me to insist upon the

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dangers, which are always and inevitably attendant upon a state of War. Under whatever circumstances it exists, its event is doubtful; its miseries alone are certain. But though war is one of the most terrible of those instruments, which Heaven employs for carrying on the secret purposes of its moral Government, and in nothing so terrible, as in that it is committed to the hands of man; yet *Victory is the Lord's, and He giveth it to whomsoever He will.* It has therefore been considered by all nations, and in all ages of the world, as an appeal to God for the decision of controversies which admit of no other arbitration; and consequently never to be entered into but with a due confidence in the justice of its cause, and with such religious rites and observances, as were thought most fit to conciliate and render propitious the *Lord of Hosts.*

If we examine our own situation with respect to the former of these points, it may, I trust, be truly asserted, if in other respects we do not forfeit our claim, that we have every reason to hope for the favour of Providence. First, we are clearly not the aggressors. Never, I believe, was any nation engaged in a war, which deserved so well, and upon so many accounts,
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the epithets of *just and necessary*. Never, perhaps, was there a contest, in which, on our part, so little of those lusts and passions are concerned, from whence ordinarily *come fightings and contentions among mankind*. We are not struggling for lucrative interests, we are not contending for empire.

The piety and wisdom of our ancestors thought it to be a just cause for exciting all Europe to arms against Louis XIV. that he had manifested designs of inordinate ambition, and had, by the unprovoked invasion of neighbouring States, by attempts to excite rebellion in these Islands, and by alliances with infidel Powers, become the common enemy of the Christian world. I need not recal to your grateful recollection the signal mercies vouchsafed to this nation during the course of these arduous conflicts; by the happy termination of which, the glory, reputation, commerce and wealth of our country have been raised to the highest pitch of human prosperity; its internal peace, we hope, for ever established; and the general stability of Europe confirmed, by securing, through the medium of a just balance of power, the freedom and independence of its several parts.

A great Revolution, and of a kind new in the world,

has taken place in the nation we then opposed. Under pretence of a reformation, a reformation which contained nothing to purify religion or to correct morals, the predominant party in that nation have destroyed their country. Not satisfied with falling by surprise on their own fellow-citizens of all descriptions, and making them a prey to their violence and rapacity, their devouring ambition, or rather an insatiable appetite for blood and rapine was excited and stimulated by domestic success. It expanded itself into a new and unheard-of scheme of conquest and aggrandizement; a scheme of conquest, which, undisguised by any of the usual specious political pretexts, has been openly avowed; in which not the extension of territory is proposed for the purpose of obtaining a securer frontier; not the acquisition of stations useful in war or commodious in peace; not the ascendancy of confederates in policy or of sects in religion---but the total subversion of every lawful government, of all order, of all property, and of all established religion; a species of conquest, by which both the conquerors and the conquered are to be involved in one common chaos of rapine, massacre, and anarchy. For this purpose, after having declared war against almost all the other

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States of Europe, they have declared war against this kingdom also.

It is but too evident, that these circumstances, which render the war, we are engaged in, so eminently just and necessary, make it at the same time the most critical and alarming. For as the injuries we are obliged to repel, are the consequences of principles, which enter into the very system and form an essential part of the new constitutional policy of our enemies, it is not easy to conceive what security can be obtained against the repetition of them, so long as those principles exist in a nation enthusiastic in its zeal to propagate them, possessing from its situation, its magnitude, and its resources, the most powerful means of reducing them to practice, and which avows it to be one of the established maxims of its government, so to propagate, and so to support them. Peace itself with such an enemy would only be changing the mode of war, and might facilitate the dispersion of opinions infinitely more to be dreaded than the prevalence of its arms. Much will depend upon the use, which may be made, of the prosperous events of war, in the support of better principles and better men, who, I trust and believe, still
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exist in that land, though oppressed and overborne. When civil order and legal government are again restored, France may be taught, as to a degree she formerly has been taught, to moderate her ambition; or if she should not learn that lesson, we may have more effectual means of resisting the efforts of ordinary ambition, springing from ordinary causes, and working by ordinary methods.

The next circumstance of danger against which we have to guard, are the attempts which are daily making with such mischievous industry, to poison the public mind by false and delusive theories, to excite a spirit of discontent and desire of innovation, and thus to destroy that veneration and regard for the constitution, upon which our common safety so entirely depends. For we must not conceal from ourselves that these flagitious theories are a sort of epidemical and contagious evil; inasmuch as they flatter the pride and self-conceit of man, fall in with the worst passions and propensities of his nature, and tend to fill the weak and unstable multitude with vain hopes and false expectations.

By the blessing of God upon the provident and able exertions of men of piety and wisdom among us, the
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contagion has been arrested in its course, and the machinations of foreign and domestic incendiaries have been happily defeated. We have rejected the insidious lessons of visionary theorists in morals, in politics, and in religion. Great are our sins in some respects—But our hands are yet unstained with blood; our consciences are free from the guilt of robbery and murder, of blasphemy, sacrilege, and rebellion.—Our's are yet the consolations of religion, the blessings of government, and the protection of equal laws; our property is sacred, our lives and liberties are secure, our homes inviolable, our churches open, we have every thing which this life requires, or which leads to the next.

In this situation of mixed hope and fear, of grief and of consolation, in which we are in some sort under the very judgment we fear, by being obliged to purchase, through the calamities of war, our exemption from the desolations which are before our eyes; and whilst the blessings we enjoy, are every instant dependant upon the fortune of war, and in their enjoyment serve to shew from what a height it is possible for us to fall,—this, I say, is the time in which we are particularly called upon to exercise the duties of this day.

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To the blessings of God upon the councils of our Sovereign, and upon the bravery of his fleets and armies, we indeed trust devoutly for success in repelling the hostilities of our enemies, and in our endeavours to establish, upon a permanent foundation, the safety of our Allies, the tranquillity of Europe, and the most important interests of Mankind.

But that the Father of all mercies may thus bless and succour us, it is meet and right, that with fasting, humiliation, and prayer, we should acknowledge and bewail those manifold transgressions which might justly draw down his heaviest judgments upon us. *For lo, the Lord is come out of his place to visit the wickedness of such as dwell upon the earth. And when men shall say peace, and all things are safe, then shall sudden destruction come upon them.*

And you will suffer me to add, that at all times, in which we are called to repentance, by whatever external signs we manifest that Grace, and whatever mortifications we impose upon ourselves in our sensual enjoyments, it is necessary, most necessary, that we should also add the sacrifice of Charity. To obtain the mercies of God, let us imitate the mercy which we invoke. If we impose upon ourselves voluntary hunger, let it be for the purpose

pose of relieving the hunger of real want. If we clothe ourselves in sackcloth and ashes, either in the outward man, or in the better contrition of the mind and spirit, let it be that the naked may be clothed; and let our conscientious humiliation fill the hearts of the desolate with joy, comfort, and exultation. So, my brethren, shall you fulfil all the law, and make your acts of piety harmoniously combine.

But not only the general duty, but even the particular mode of Charity, seems to be pointed out by the office we are this day performing. We abhor the cruelties and persecutions which have polluted the kingdom of France. But they have also filled the kingdom of Great Britain with objects of compassion. Those who aim at our destruction, have begun by driving out from among them the most innoxious, the most meritorious of their brethren, the priests of their altars, the magistrates of their tribunals, the proprietors of their lands. Be it our task to call down the Mercy of Heaven on our endeavours against the attempts of France, by relieving those who have suffered by its crimes. These are the arms by which we shall best defend ourselves. We are

indeed not at war with the people, we are at war with their vices and crimes. And in a true Christian Spirit, while we pray God to change their hearts, let us shew them by our example, what they ought to be. Let us teach them to be merciful to their own, by shewing ourselves merciful to the stranger;---to him, who is indeed a stranger; a stranger to our name, to our nation, to our manners, to our language---a stranger in every sense, in which it shall be used in that day of remuneration, when the Saviour of Mankind, identifying himself with the wretched, shall say, *I was a stranger and you took me in.* We have indeed merited much, as far as merit can be in performing so necessary a duty, in this mode already; and this nation has acquired an immortal reputation by the promptitude and copiousness of its Charity. Let us therefore not fail in the good course we have begun. Our prosperity is great. Let us sacrifice to God from the abundance of his gifts, and thereby sanctify that abundance, instead of turning it into the means of our corruption, and the cause of our punishment.

SERMON

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SERMON II.

St. LUKE, c. xiii. v. 5.

"NAY: BUT, EXCEPT YE REPENT, YE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH."

IN pursuance of the plan laid down in my last discourse, I shall now proceed to consider those national and prevailing vices, which to the Christian statesman (who refers all things to the principles, which because they govern the moral agency of the world, must always more or less affect and decide upon the felicity of nations) constitute our true danger.

The merciful Providence of God may and I trust will defeat the malice and save us out of the hands of our enemies. But we must pray that he would also save us out of our own hands. The dreadful example of our neighbours must teach us, if we read it rightly, that there exists in the frame and constitution of our nature principles

principles of evil, which if generally let loose, if not ruled and subjugated by the restraints of religion and morality, are sufficient to spread over our land a devastation as sudden, as wide and as horrible, as the arms of the most rapid and savage conqueror. For France yielded to no external enemy. It was the abundance of her iniquity, (of what species of iniquity we shall presently have occasion to enquire) it was an inward ebullition, which like a subterraneous fire burst out and buried her Church and her Monarchy in one universal ruin. We must therefore look within; being sure, that if the same evils predominate, in whatever degree, they must produce the same effect. It is in vain to contend! *Unless ye Repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

In so great an exigence, men will be inclined to put their confidence in various expedients. Some will rely on our fleets and armies: some upon the greatness of our pecuniary resources. There are many, who justly impressed with the tried excellence of our civil and religious establishments, are inclined to place an intire dependance upon the general prosperity resulting from them, as a sufficient preservative against all the artifices of
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factious and designing agitators. We flatter ourselves, that our natures could never be capable of those acts of injustice, and of blood, which are at once the crime and the calamity of our neighbours.

But surely all these grounds of confidence, though perhaps, in a secondary view of things, not to be neglected or despised, favour too much of the pride of human force; or, perhaps, they are even symptoms of that fatal security, which is ever the precursor of public calamity. They partake of that delusion by which we are inclined to suppose ourselves more wise, more virtuous, more humane, and less subject to temptation than other men.—A most dangerous error! It is itself a beginning of corruption: a step to our own downfall, and the very vice from which our Saviour warned us when he said, *Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* When we look to France, we must take care not to imitate the sinful arrogance of the Pharisee, who *thanked God that he was not like that publican.*

Viewing the matter on mere temporal grounds, and considering the various tempers and dispositions, of which a great nation is composed (to say nothing of the weaknesses

nesses of each of us in particular), there are too many causes of alarm and principles of danger.

It is almost impossible that in consequence of the familiar intercourse, which during so long a period has subsisted between the two nations, our principles, our opinions, and our modes of thinking should not be in some degree assimilated. We see clearly how much this has been the case in all the trivial modes and fashions of common life, and with what eagerness we have been long accustomed to catch at and imitate each others manner. We know too how extensively the literature of each country has spread over the other.

That France has suffered considerably from this communication, by imbibing some of those noxious effluvia which the native strength and vigour of our constitution has enabled us to throw off, cannot I think be doubted. But the action of poisons is variable and uncertain; and the same pestilential taint, which has blown over us without harm at one season, may at another be attended with instant and fatal consequences. The atheists of France derive indeed their pedigree from writers of the same stamp of this nation. But those principles, which,
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in the dry, metaphysical form they assumed in this country, produced no general bad effects, may become highly mischievous, if returned to us dressed up, as they have been in France, in various attractive forms, and converted, after their example, into practical maxims, destructive of all morality and civil government.

Besides, in the most perfect governments, pretexts will never be wanting to interested and artful leaders, too plausible for ordinary understandings to detect, and which are sure of imposing upon the less instructed and less experienced part of mankind, who are easily intoxicated by that flattery, which, whilst it appeals to, blinds their judgment, and makes them the easy prey of every kind of impostor. The history of every age will prove how seldom these arts have failed of, at least, a temporary success.

Our security therefore must be sought in deeper foundations than the mere persuasion of the excellence of our government, or even the experience of the benefits we reap from it—A foundation which can alone give adequate security to any government, and, by the neglect of which, the government of France fell to the ground.

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—I mean, the eternal foundations of natural and revealed religion.

In order to make the people of France fit instruments for the works of horror, in which they were to be engaged, the projectors and leaders of the Revolution did, indeed, find it necessary to absolve them from all the obligations of civil government. This was accomplished by the promulgation of that celebrated code, called the Rights of Man, and other collections of legislative aphorisms; in which the sacred duties of insurrection and rebellion was clearly developed and fully established.

This set of principles, however, nefarious as it is, must rather be considered as itself an effect, than as the primary cause of the evils, under which France now labours.

We all know to what a scandalous extent, with what publicity, with what industry, and with what success the general foundations, as well as the particular doctrines of our Belief had been attacked for many years, in that now afflicted country. The poison of infidelity had spread wide and far. That was indeed the crying sin of France. For though it was by no means universal, and though the late enormities (which is some sort of consolation

lation to our nature in the contemplation of them), have given occasion to the display of unequivocal Faith and fortitude in many acts of Christian heroism, and particularly in the conduct and sufferings of almost the whole Clergy of France; ^{yet} Without attempting, ~~however,~~ to ascertain to what extent the evil proceeded, it cannot be denied, that infidelity and a contempt for religion had made a very considerable progress in that country, and was become, what is always of great sway in that nation, the mode and the fashion, and particularly amongst all the pretenders to literature of every kind and in every degree.

I have taken this circumstance as the main cause of the judgment which has fallen upon our neighbours, although many other vicious principles operated also, because it was the root of them all. Of these secondary causes, not the least powerful or prevalent, was a sort of independance of mind, a disdain of all superiority, an intoxication of the understanding; by which every man (and especially those, whose professions lead them to the cultivation of the intellectual faculties) thought himself entitled to a better

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place, than that, in which the order of Providence had placed him; in short, to that place, which, by his own ability, he might hope to obtain in the struggle and scramble of an universal revolution. To effect this universal competition, it was necessary to throw down every existing establishment. In order to give full scope to that mental ability, which was to win the race in that competition, every restraint of morality, and even of human feeling was to be laid aside.

This fatal spirit of independance and pride of intellect, evidently proceeds, and is directly deducible, from the cause we mentioned above, the spirit of irreligion. For when we have accustomed ourselves to presume entirely upon the sufficiency of our own understanding, to suppose ourselves equal to the comprehension of universal nature, to disdain the submission of our mind to the mysterious inculcations of natural, much more of revealed religion; when we have made ourselves independant of God himself, and supposed ourselves aboriginal beings, derived from no author, and subject to no account, is it surprising, that we should reject all submission to the authority of other men; and that recognizing no wisdom
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in creation itself, we should disdain the contrivances of human institutions, and consider the world, in which we live, only as a stage upon which we are at liberty to act our fancies, and to contend with each other who shall have the most of its transitory enjoyments ?

Indeed it is the knowledge and the consequent love of God, on which not only morality is built, as a science, but on which practically the whole order and happiness of society depends : and the want of which therefore subverts the whole. It is that, which gives every thing its due place and relation. It is that, which even gives our faculties and appetites their true exercise and their true enjoyment.

God having created Man after his own image, and made our nature to partake of the divine, was pleased, by a stupendous instance of goodness and condescension, to propose the fruition of himself for our ultimate supreme Good. That man should not be ignorant of his high origin, and of his end, his great Creator has endowed his mind with faculties, which nothing but the knowledge of his infinite perfections can fill, and with desires of happiness which nothing but the enjoyment of himself can

fatisfy. All the higher powers of reason, all the generous affections of the soul, the very sense and love of whatever is beautiful and good, as they are derived from him, they powerfully draw us back again to him, who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

The great Author of all things, whilst he thus created us ultimately for himself, created us also immediately for each other, and has ordained that the attainment of our supreme good should be the reward of our good conduct under this second law of our nature. He has thus connected and bound together our temporal and eternal, our separate and our common interests, every thing human and divine, by a chain that cannot be broken.

The example of France has demonstrated, or rather confirmed the demonstration, by a recent and convincing experiment, that religion is not only necessary to us individually, and with a view to a future life, but that it is necessary also, and that we are even collectively responsible for the want of it, in our present mode of existence. We are, therefore, called upon, by the most powerful warning, to apply our utmost attention to that point, and to examine how we stand with regard to it collectively, as
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well as individually : since, if we fail there, it is vain to think we can escape the judgment which hangs over our heads, and which has fallen upon our neighbours.—A judgment, in that case, inevitable, even from the ordinary chain of moral and political causes.

On this head (as far as we can be permitted in this place to value ourselves for any thing) I trust I can congratulate you, that the nation is not notoriously guilty. Our ears are not shocked (hardly even amongst the light and giddy) by an open profession of infidelity. The sacred topics of Religion, and the Mysteries of our Faith, are not a subject of contempt and ridicule. Our minds are not generally sophisticated with the vain theories of false philosophy. Our genius is not exercised, even so much as formerly it had been, in poisoning the sources of our eternal happiness, or in subverting the foundations of our temporal felicity. Atheism and impiety is not the road to fame and preferment, as unfortunately—calamitously it often was in France. But yet, even in this circumstance of just exultation, there is something to prevent us from being elated. It is a blessing, for which we must one and all be thankful to
 Providence,

Providence, but which also lessens the merit of each of us individually in not being shaken from his faith. Our temptations are less, and we have therefore a more strict account to render. It is not enough that we are not theoretic infidels. We must have a living, a practical, an influencing faith. We must keep it alive and full of energy by proper and rational means.

That, which I have therefore more particularly to call to your attention, and with which we may reproach ourselves as the peculiar vice of this age, and which at this time is particularly dangerous, and has but too near a connection with the great cause and mother of evils in France, is a cold, irregular, indifferent, careless observance, and frequently a total neglect, of all the rites and formal institutions of the religion we profess. We have not, I believe, forgot the grounds of our faith. We have not ceased entirely to apply them to our lives and actions. But we content ourselves with our general good intentions; with a private, a mental, or with no devotion. How many are there, especially in this metropolis, men otherwise no way depraved, who never go to church. The practice of family prayer is almost wholly disused.

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The Scriptures are much less read than formerly: and there are many, alas! too many, who never take the opportunity of that thorough revision of their lives, and that purification of their minds, which is afforded by the self-preparation requisite for the approach to the Holy Communion.

Since I am upon this subject, I have also to add (for in these things there is a natural connection), that religious instruction is much neglected with regard to children, servants, and dependants. All these circumstances, if not each of them of the greatest magnitude, are yet considerable taken together, and form an object of just and serious apprehension.

We must take care how we consider these things, as by any means indifferent. It may be true, that religion has been formerly clogged with too many observances, and degenerated into a sort of unmeaning, and mechanical, as well as servile ritual, often detrimental to the substance of true piety. The purer mode of reformed Faith, which we profess, has infinitely simplified religious rites, but it has not abolished them. Because many are taken away, we are not to argue that none are important,

important, but rather conclude in favour of the importance of those which remain.

All public worship implies, and is founded on a supposition (which those who have examined our faculties confess to be just) that religion in man cannot be wholly of a speculative and abstract nature. As we are composed both of body and soul, so every motion of the mind is manifested by some outward signification; and not only so, but that outward signification seems in a manner necessary to the formation of our thoughts themselves. Until we have given words or acts to our thoughts, we hardly know what they are. Were we to cease to speak or to act, we are not sure, that we should not also cease to think.

But, if to accompany the inward operations of our minds with outward demonstration is necessary to us individually, much more so is it in our social character. We are in all things a social animal. All our affections, if they are not actually brought into existence, are certainly much increased by mutual communication. We laugh, we weep by sympathy. And no one can have avoided observing, how much more easily and how much more strongly men are agitated and affected, when in
company

company and in numbers, especially in theatres and public assemblies, than when alone. It is our nature also to be together : we associate for labour ; we associate for conviviality ; we associate for consultation. We ought also to associate for the performance of religious duties. By so doing, we encrease each other's fervour ; we excite each other's devotion ; we learn by each other's example.

I do not mean here to answer the objections against set forms of prayer. Our church establishment supposes them already answered. They however imply, that either devotion is better exercised, or at least that an additional species of it can be exercised, in publick, and in common.

Religious rites imply, not only set words, but set times ; which are most useful in human affairs, since it is well known, that what may be done at any time is often not done at all. When we consider the desultory and irregular nature of man in all his actions, what a number of occupations he has, not only from the multiplicity of his faculties, but from the necessities of his mortal condition ; when we consider also of what an oblivious nature

he is, how prone to all manner of evil, and how much he stands in need of all sorts of instigations and remembrances to virtue and a godly life, we must own, that no man can answer to his own conscience, or can persuade himself, that he will not entirely forget his God, or will faithfully perform his duty towards man, who has the confident presumption to rely on the voluntary impulses of his own zeal, and to neglect those aids and assistances, and those periodical calls, by which the wisdom of our church, according to the instructions left by Christ himself, has provided for the practice of a genuine devotion, and the attainment of Christian perfection.

Wherefore, brethren, I exhort you, as many as here present, by no means to neglect these most necessary duties. Practise them yourselves, and exhort others to practise; and leave no method untried, as far as in you lies, either by precept or example, to correct this national vice, into which we are near falling, if we are not already fallen into it.

It is indeed plain, from many circumstances, that religion does not hold the same estimation and place in our minds, which it ought to do, and which it formerly did. The
public

public magnificence no longer takes that direction. Among the monuments of arts, which have been raised in our time, the theatres, which have been built and rebuilt, the places of public amusement, or private elegance, of every kind which rise around ; what one edifice of more than ordinary structure is to be seen to invite to prayer, and to raise the mind to a nobler devotion ? Rich, prosperous, luxurious, powerful, as the nation is, what church have we raised worthy of the Deity ? Nothing in materials, or in workmanship, nothing in elegance or in durability, superior to a warehouse : nothing but hovels of brick, built upon speculation, upon trading principles, for the mart of religion.

The last century has left us noble monuments of its piety. We are shamed by the works even of our Gothic ancestors, many of which are yet preserved, and many decorate the land even in their ruins. And yet, methinks, this is not an unworthy employment of the national wealth. By this also the arts would be encouraged, and the mechanic employed, and the blessings of Providence diffused. Here would be seen unostentatious splendour, pomp without pride, and magnificence

devoid of luxury. Here would expence be proportioned to the value of the object. The people would learn its true dignity in these publick mansions: the rich would tread with reverential awe, and the poor man would walk in the Temple of his God with erected but unassuming aspect, submitting to that unequal distribution of private fortune, which gave him so large a share in the publick grandeur.

I hope you will pardon this digression. It however appertains to our subject, which is an indifference to religion. Where our treasure is, there will be our heart. We may invert the sentiment, and with equal truth say, Where our heart is, there will be our treasure. We should certainly decorate the object of our affections. If we were as truly a religious people as we ought, and as, I trust, we shall be, religion should enter into all the parts of our life, and make an ingredient in our enjoyments and in our festivities themselves. Let us therefore recollect ourselves in this particular. Let us keep that great and universal relation to the first principle of all things, by which alone our nature is ennobled, or can be prevented from degenerating into depravity,—let us
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keep it habitually and constantly in our minds and in our actions, and before our eyes, in the manner that belongs to the dignity and importance of the object. Let us turn ourselves towards God in all things. Let us take care not to fail where France has failed. This point secured, every thing will be secure. When we have the hereditary religion of the world, by which God laid the redemption of mankind before the foundations of the earth, and which he has delivered down to us in a series of types and prophecies, until the completion of all things in Christ Jesus; when we have this constantly present, and deeply impressed on our thoughts, we shall be in no danger from sophisms against those civil hereditary rights, on which the whole frame of our constitution, all the branches of our government and of our liberties are founded. A contemplation of the works of God, of the mysteries of the Creation itself, and the dark obscurities which cloud the very nature of our present existence, whilst it elevates the mind, will accustom it to that sobriety of investigation, that modest docility, which characterise true philosophy. Finding that the essence of things is not to be comprehended, and that there are
innumerable

innumerable difficulties in the natural world, we shall not be surprized to find them in the infinitely greater complication of the moral world; and in that complication which proceeds from our social union. We shall cease ignorantly to presume to square political institutions to one narrow theory, deduced from a few jejune and inprolific principles; and keeping before our eyes the great ends of God in the moral government of the world, the superintendence of his Providence, and lastly, the final retribution of rewards and punishments, we shall have arguments enough for acquiescence, and motives of consolation, in all the distinctions of rank and inequalities of condition, which lead to uneasy thoughts. By this means we shall be instrumental to our own preservation against the evils of innovating speculation, and seconding by our actions the operation of our prayers, effect through the favour of the Divine Providence, that *we also shall not perish.*

F I N I S.

